

# Nucleotide sequences of the continuous and separated *petA*, *petB* and *petD* chloroplast genes in *Chlamydomonas reinhardtii*

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Received 18 April 1991

We have mapped and sequenced the *petA* (*cytF*), *petB* (*cytB6*) and *petD* (subunit IV) genes on the chloroplast genome of *Chlamydomonas reinhardtii*. At variance with the *pet* genes in higher plant chloroplasts, the *petB* and *petD* genes are continuous, not adjacent and not located next to the *psbB* gene. The corresponding polypeptide sequences are highly conserved when compared with their counterparts from other sources but have a few features specific of algal *cytB6/f* complexes. In particular the transit sequence of *cytF* displays unique characteristics when compared with those previously described for *cytF* in higher plants.

Pet gene; Cytochrome *b6/f* complex; Transit peptide; *Chlamydomonas reinhardtii*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The unicellular green alga *Chlamydomonas reinhardtii* has proven particularly useful in studying the genetic expression in eucaryotic cells performing oxygenic photosynthesis. Besides the opportunity to isolate and characterize photosynthesis mutants by conventional mutagenesis [1], it is now possible to perform site-directed mutagenesis using various transformation strategies [2]. Both approaches have been used extensively in the study of some of the major protein complexes of the photosynthetic apparatus, the PSI, PSII and ATP synthase complexes [2,3]. Cytochrome *b6/f* complexes have been well characterized in *C. reinhardtii* and we have previously described the biochemical properties of a variety of mutants altered in *cytB6/f* complexes [4]. Further characterization of the genetic lesions in these mutants was hampered by the lack of information on the localization and nucleotide sequences of the *pet* genes on the chloroplast genome of *C. reinhardtii*. Here we present a characterization of these genes in the WT strain which opens the way to an understanding of the changes in genetic expression in photosynthesis mutants altered at the level of *cytB6/f* complexes.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Cells were grown in TAP (tris-acetate-phosphate) medium at 25°C as described by Harris [3]. Chloroplast DNA was isolated as described in Rochaix et al. [5]. Restriction enzyme digestions, DNA electrophoresis, DNA blotting were performed according to current pro-

cedures [6]. Heterologous DNA hybridizations were as described in Woessner et al. [7]. The *HindIII* DNA restriction fragments were cloned from an *HindIII* bank of WT *C. reinhardtii* in the PUN121 vector, using spinach probes or the WT restriction fragment Bg3, and then sub-cloned into bluescript vector KS- for sequencing. Dideoxy sequencing of double stranded DNA templates was performed using a sequenase (version 2) kit, according to the protocol of the supplier (US Biochemicals) with 35S-dATP (see Fig. 1 B,C for sequencing strategy). Oligonucleotide primers were synthesised using a LKB DNA-synthetiser and purified according to the protocol of the manufacturers. DNA sequences were compiled and analysed using PC GENE programmes (A. Bairoch, Department of Medical Biochemistry, University of Geneva). RNA sequencing using AMV-reverse transcriptase and a synthetic oligonucleotide as primer was done according to [8].

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. Localization of *petA*, *petB* and *petD* genes in *Chlamydomonas reinhardtii*

The *petA*, *petB*, *petD* genes were mapped on the chloroplast genome of *C. reinhardtii* using probes from the corresponding *pet* genes in spinach. As indicated on Fig. 1, *petB* was found on the chloroplast DNA restriction fragments Ba11 (16 kb) and R20 (7.3 kb) numbered after Rochaix [9] (data not shown). Probes for *petA* and *petD* genes both hybridized to the same restriction fragments Ba9 (10.8 kb) and R26 (17.4 kb). Therefore, contrarily to what has been observed in higher plants the *petB* and *petD* genes are separated on the chloroplast genome and are not part of a *psbB-psbF-petB-petD* cluster [10–13]. While the localization of the *psbF* gene in *C. reinhardtii* is not yet known, the *psbB* gene is located on the restriction fragment R10, far from any of the *pet* genes [14].

### 3.2. Cloning and sequencing of the *pet* genes

In order to isolate the genes, an *HindIII* bank of

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chloroplast DNA was constructed by cloning a total *Hind*III digest of chloroplast DNA into the pUN121 vector. This bank was then screened by hybridization with the spinach *petA*, *petB* and *petD* probes. The *petB* probe hybridized to two *Hind*III fragments of 1.8 and 1.5 kbp while the *petA* and *petD* probes each hybridized to single *Hind*III fragments of 3.5 and 1.1 kbp respectively. These fragments were subcloned into the blue-script KS<sup>-</sup> vector and sequenced by dideoxy termination chain method. While the *petD* gene was completely located on the 1.1 kbp *Hind*III fragment, the *petB* gene contained an internal *Hind*III restriction site and was therefore located on two different fragments, the N-terminal part of the gene being on the 1.5 kbp fragment and the C-terminal part of the gene being on the 1.8 kbp fragment.

The 3.5 kbp fragment that hybridized to the *petA* probe contained only the 287 last amino acids of the gene. To clone the adjacent *Hind*III fragment, encoding the 30 amino acids of the N-terminal part of the gene and corresponding to the transit peptide, we used the adjacent Bg3 fragment as a probe (see Fig. 1B) to screen the *Hind*III bank. It hybridized to two fragments of 1.9 and 0.9 kbp respectively, the first one being adjacent to the 3.5 kbp *Hind*III fragment. After subcloning in KS<sup>-</sup> we sequenced this fragment which encoded a 30 residues peptide with typical features of *C. reinhardtii* transit peptides. However, the sequence of this transit peptide was completely different from those of *petA* genes from higher plants. We confirmed that this transit peptide was correctly assigned to the N-terminus extension of *cyt f* by sequencing directly the *petA* mRNA across the *Hind*III site using a synthetic oligonucleotide as primer (data not shown).

The nucleotide sequences of these three genes together with their translation in amino acid sequences are shown on Fig. 2. In contrast with what has been observed in many cases (see for instance [10–13,15]), the three *pet* genes are continuous. The amino acid sequences of *cyt b* and subunit IV are highly conserved when compared with those in higher plants such as tobacco [11], with 89% and 81% of identical residues respectively, or cyanobacteria such as *Nostoc* [15], with 86% and 76% of identical residues respectively.

Among the amino acid changes observed in *cyt b*6 from *C. reinhardtii*, we note that one of the sites conferring antimycin A sensitivity in yeast *cyt b*, at Gly37 in the first transmembrane  $\alpha$ -helix [16], is substituted for by Phe (position 41) in the present case instead of Leu in all other *cyt b*6 sequences available in the data bank NBRF [17]. Although the antimycin A sensitivity of cyclic electron flow in higher plants has been ascribed to another site than *cyt b*6 [18], it should be noted that cyclic electron flow is antimycin A insensitive in *C. reinhardtii* [19]. Such a Leu/Phe change is far from being conservative and is for instance responsible for the loss of funiculosin sensitivity when it occurs at position 198 in helix IV of yeast *cyt b* [20].

Subunit IV has a 21 residues N-terminus extension, of similar length as in *Nostoc*, when compared to that in tobacco. It has two characteristics which appear specific to unicellular green algae (shared by that in *C. eugametos* [21] and in *Oocystaceae* gen. sp. [22]): a Pro-Ala-Ala-Met sequence starting at position 59, whereas subunit IV from higher plants and *Marcantia* display a Pro-Ser-Met-Ile at the same positions, and Ile instead of Lys at position 151.

Although the sequence of mature *cyt f* is well conserved in *C. reinhardtii*, it displays less homology with its counterparts from tobacco (70%) [11] or *Nostoc* (63%) [23] than *cyt b*6 and subunit IV. This is not surprising since most of the polypeptide chain folds in the lumen with only one  $\alpha$ -helix spanning the membrane in the C-terminus region [24]. The transit peptide from *cyt f* is of particular interest since it is the unique example of such a sequence for a chloroplast-encoded polypeptide in *C. reinhardtii*. Shown in Fig. 3 is a comparison of various transit peptides previously described for (A) lumenal-targeted polypeptides of nuclear origin in *C. reinhardtii* and (B) *cyt f* from various species. Comparison of the various transit peptides in *C. reinhardtii* further confirms their mosaic structure, with a positively charged N-terminus extension observed only in nuclear-encoded polypeptides and most likely involved in the translocation across the envelope membrane, a hydrophobic stretch starting in positions –25/–20 from the final cleavage site, which is typical of lumenal polypeptides and the consensus sequence AXA for lumenal signal

Fig. 1. (A) Physical map of the chloroplast genome of *C. reinhardtii* (190 kbp). Outer circle shows the localization of *petA*, *petB* and *petD* genes with respect to *atpB*, *rbcL*, *psbB* and to inverted repeats containing *psbA* and ribosomal RNA genes (thick black bars). Arrows point to direction of transcription when it is known. Inner circle shows positions of the relevant *Eco*RI (outside) and *Bam*HI (inside) restriction fragments. (B) Restriction map of the Ba9 fragment containing the *petA* and *petD* genes. Also indicated are some restriction sites (B = *Bam*HI, Bg = *Bgl*II, H = *Hind*III, P = *Pst*I, A = *Acl*I). Direction of transcription is indicated by arrows. Sites of hybridization of the spinach (sp) probes are indicated below the genes (black bars). Restriction fragments are numbered after Rochema (Bg3) [9] or Gilham for *Pst* (cited in [3]). Lower part of (B) shows enlargement of the two regions containing *petA* and *petD*. Sequencing strategies are illustrated by arrows with a dot where synthetic oligonucleotide primers were used, by arrows without dots when commercial primers were used in subclones originating from known restriction sites. Subclones used to sequence the *petD* gene were obtained by the *Exo*III deletion procedure [26]. Arrow above the *petA* gene represents mRNA sequencing reaction across the *Hind*III site. (C) Schematic map of the *petB* region indicating the sequencing strategy. Same symbols as in (B).

petA

50  
 AACGAAC TGG AAT CCCC TT A TAGATA AA ATTA ATATCT ATTTT AAAATTG AATAGT TTTT ATTCTAG TTTT CGTTT TAAGATTA ATAA AAT  
 100  
 ATGTCTAACCAAGTATTTACTACTTTACGCGCAGCAACATTAGCTGTTATTTTAGGTATGGCTGGTGGCTTAGCAGTAAGTCCAGCTCAA  
 1 METSerAsnGlnValPheThrThrLeuArgAlaAlaThrLeuAlaValIleLeuGlyMetAlaGlyGlyLeuAlaValSerProAlaGln  
 200  
 GCTTACCCTGTATTTGCACAACAAAAC TACGCTA ACCCACTGAGGCTAATGGTCGTATTGTATGTGCAAACTGTCACTTAGCGCAAAA  
 31 AlaTyrProValPheAlaGlnGlnAsnTyrAlaAsnProArgGluAlaAsnGlyArgIleVALCYSALAAASNCYSHISLeuAlaGlnLys  
 300  
 GCAGTTGAAATCGAAGTACCACAAGCTGTTTACCTGATACTGTTTTGAGCTGTTATTGAACTTCCATACGATAACAAGTTAAACAA  
 61 AlaValGluIleGluValProGlnAlaValLeuProAspThrValPheGluAlaValIleGluLeuProTyrAspLysGlnValLysGln  
 400  
 GTTTTAGCTAATGGTAAAAAAGGTGACTTAAACGTTGGTATGGTTTTAATTTTACCAGAAGGTTTGAATTAGCACCACCAGATCGCGTT  
 91 ValLeuAlaAsnGlyLysLysGlyAspLeuAsnValGlyMetValLeuIleLeuProGluGlyPheGluLeuAlaProProAspArgVal  
 500  
 CCGGCAGAAATTAAAGAAAAAGTTGGTAACCTTTACTACCAACCATACAGTCCAGAACAAAAAATATTTTAGTTGTTGGTCCAGTTCCA  
 121 ProAlaGluIleLysGluLysValGlyAsnLeuTyrTyrGlnProTyrSerProGluGlnLysAsnIleLeuValValGlyProValPro  
 550  
 GGTAAAAATACAGTGAATGGTAGTACCTATTTTATCTCCAGATCCTGCTAAAAATAAAACGTTTCTTACTTAAATATCCTATTTAT  
 151 GlyLysLysTyrSerGluMetValValProIleLeuSerProAspProAlaLysAsnLysAsnValSerTyrLeuLysTyrProIleTyr  
 650  
 TTTGGTGGTAAATCGTGGTCGTGGTCAAGTATATCCAGATGGTAAAAATCAACAACACTATTTACAACGCATCAGCAGCTGGTAAAT  
 181 PheGlyGlyAsnArgGlyArgGlyGlnValTyrProAspGlyLysLysSerAsnAsnThrIleTyrAsnAlaSerAlaAlaGlyLysIle  
 750  
 GTAGCAATCACAGCTCTTTCTGAGAAAAAAGGTGGTTTTGAAGTTTCAATTGAAAAAGCAACGGTGAAGTTGTTGTAGACAAAATCCCA  
 211 ValAlaIleThrAlaLeuSerGluLysLysGlyGlyGluValSerIleGluLysAlaAsnGlyGluValValValAspLysIlePro  
 850  
 GCAGGTCTGATTTAATTGTTAAAGAAGGTCAAACCTGTACAAGCAGATCAACCATTAAACAACACCTAACGTTGGTGGTTTTGGTTCAG  
 241 AlaGlyProAspLeuIleValLysGluGlyGlnThrValGlnAlaAspGlnProLeuThrAsnAsnProAsnValGlyGlyPheGlyGln  
 950  
 GCTGAAACTGAAATTGTATTACAAAACCTGCTCGTATTCAAGGTTTATTAGTATTCTTCAAGTTTGTCTTACTCAAGTTTATTAT  
 271 AlaGluThrGluIleValLeuGlnAsnProAlaArgIleGlnGlyLeuLeuValPhePheSerPheValLeuLeuThrGlnValLeuLeu  
 1000  
 GTTCTTAAGAAAAACAATTTCGAAAAAGTTCAATTAGCAGAAATGAACTTCTAATATTTAATTTTTGTAGGGCTGCTGTGCAGTCTCTAC  
 301 ValLeuLysLysLysGlnPheGluLysValGlnLeuAlaGluMetAsnPhe---

petB

50  
 TATAACTTTATTTAACTTTAATAATTAAGCTACACATTTTTTAGTCTTAAGAAAGCCTAATGGTCATGTCACAATCTTATAAAATTTTAT  
 100  
 ATGAGTAAAGTATACGATTGGTTTGAAGAAGCTTTAGAAAATCAAGCAATTGCTGATGATATTACAAGTAAATATGTTCCACCACACGTA  
 1 METSerLysValTyrAspTrpPheGluGluArgLeuGluIleGlnAlaIleAlaAspAspIleThrSerLysTyrValProProHisVal  
 200  
 AATATTTTCTACTGTATTGGTGGTATTACTTTTACATGTTTCTTGTGCAAGTAGCTACTGGTTTTGCTATGACTTTTCTACTACCGTCCA  
 31 AsnIlePheTyrCysIleGlyGlyIleThrPheThrCysPheLeuValGlnValAlaThrGlyPheAlaMetThrPheTyrTyrArgPro  
 300  
 ACAGTAGCAGAAGCTTTCGCATCAGTACAATACATTATGACTGATGTTAACTTTGGTTGGTTAATTCGTTCAATTCACCGTTGGTCAGCT  
 61 ThrValAlaGluAlaPheAlaSerValGlnTyrIleMetThrAspValAsnPheGlyTrpLeuIleArgSerIleHISArgTrpSerAla  
 400  
 AGTATGATGGTTCTTATGATGGTTTTACACGTTTTCCGTGTATATTTAACAGGTGGTTTCAAACGTCCACGTGAATTAACATGGGTTACA  
 91 SerMetMetValLeuMetMetValLeuHISValPheArgValTyrLeuThrGlyGlyPheLysArgProArgGluLeuThrTrpValThr  
 500  
 GGTGTAATCATGGCTGTATGTACAGTTTCTTTGGTGTAAACAGGTTATTCATTACCATGGGACCAAGTTGGTTACTGGGCGGTAAAAATT  
 121 GlyValIleMetAlaValCysThrValSerPheGlyValThrGlyTyrSerLeuProTrpAspGlnValGlyTyrTrpAlaValLysIle  
 550  
 GTAACAGGTGTTCTGTATGCAATCCCAGGTGTTGGTGGTTTCATTGTTGAGTTATTACGTGGTGGTGGTGGTGGTCAAGCAACTTTA  
 151 ValThrGlyValProAspAlaIleProGlyValGlyGlyPheIleValGluLeuLeuArgGlyGlyValGlyValGlyGlnAlaThrLeu  
 650  
 ACACGTTTCTACAGTTTACACACTTTTCGTATTACCACTTTTAAACAGCTGTTTTCATGTTAATGCACCTTCTTAATGATTCTGTAACAAGGT  
 181 ThrArgPheTyrSerLeuHISThrPheValLeuProLeuLeuThrAlaValPheMetLeuMetHISLeuMetIleArgLysGlnGly  
 750  
 ATTTACAGGTCTCTATAATATTTAATATCCATTTCTTTTACTTGCTCGGATATAGACTAGCTTTTTAGGCTGCACGTTGTTTCCAAGGC  
 IleSerGlyProLeu---  
 850  
 GTTGGCCATTGAAGTTATTCCCAAAGGGATACACCCCTTTGGTAAATAAACTTCAATTTTTACTGTTGTGGTGGTGGTGGTCTAAACAAC  
 900

## petD

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          50
GCCAAATCTACTTAAATTAGATTAAATAGTTTAAAAATGGATAGATTTAAATTAAAAACAGAAGTTAAATGTAATTCTGTCCCTTT
          100
TTACAGGGTGGTATCTCTAAAAACCAGGCTTGCCCAATCAACAATTTAAAGCTTATTTAGTTTTATTGAAAAATTAACGGATAATAAAT
          200
ATGTCAGTTACTAAAAACCTGATTTAAGCGATCCAGTTTAAAGCAAAATTAGCTAAAGGTATGGGTCACAACACTTACGGTGAACCT
1  METSerValThrLysLysProAspLeuSerAspProValLeuLysAlaLysLeuAlaLysGlyMetGlyHisAsnThrTyrGlyGluPro
          300
GCTTGGCTTAAAGATTTATTATACATGTTCCCTGTTGTTATTTTAGGTACATTTGCATGTGTTATTGGTTTATCTGTTTTAGACCCAGCT
31  AlaTrpProAsnAspLeuLeuTyrMetPheProValValIleLeuGlyThrPheAlaCysValIleGlyLeuSerValLeuAspProAla
          400
GCTATGGGTGAGCCAGCAAACCCATTTGCTACTCCACTTGAAATTTTACCAGAATGGTATTTCTACCCTGTATTCCAAATTTTACGTGTA
61  AlaMetGlyGluProAlaAsnProPheAlaThrProLeuGluIleLeuProGluTrpTyrPheTyrProValPheGlnIleLeuArgVal
          500
GTTCCAAACAACTTCTAGGTGTATTATTAAATGGCAGCAGTACCTGCAGGCCTTATCACGGTACCGTTCATTGAAAGTATTAACAAATTC
91  ValProAsnLysLeuLeuGlyValLeuLeuMetAlaAlaValProAlaGlyLeuIleThrValProPheIleGluSerIleAsnLysPhe
          550
CAAACCCATACCGTCGTCCTCAATCGCTACTATCTTATTCCTTTTAGGAACCTTTAGTTGCTGTTTGGTTAGGTATTGGTTCAACATTCCCT
121  GlnAsnProTyrArgArgProIleAlaThrIleLeuPheLeuLeuGlyThrLeuValAlaValTrpLeuGlyIleGlySerThrPhePro
          650
ATTGATATTTCTTTAACTTTAGGTTTATTCTAATCTAAAATTTTAAATTTCCCTCTAGGGTTGCAATACGATTGCAACCTGAAGGGGAA
151  IleAspIleSerLeuThrLeuGlyLeuPhe---
          700

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Fig. 2. Nucleotide and deduced amino acid sequences of petA, petB and petD genes. Underlined amino acids are part of the transmembrane helix domains, the 4 histidines of cytb6 and the ValCysAlaAsnCysHis region of cyf6 involved in heme coordination are written in capital letters in the amino acid sequence. Underlined residues point to possible features specific of algal sequences (for details see the text). The arrow in the cyf6 amino acid sequence points to the cleavage site of the pre-cyf6.

peptidase which is similar to that required for secretory proteins in procaryotes. The transit peptide for cytf in *C. reinhardtii* differs widely from those previously described for cytf from other sources. In particular it shows no conserved amino acid residues besides those of the cleavage site. In contrast, comparison of the transit peptides (35 residues) from five different plants available in the NBRF data bank [17] (tobacco, primrose, pea, spinach and rice, starting at the Met<sup>23</sup> position for the latter) reveals conservation of 54% of the residues using Val/Leu/Ile, Lys/Arg and Asp/Glu conservative substitutions. The transit peptide of cytf in *C. reinhardtii* is particularly poor in charged residues

with only one positive charge whereas its counterparts from other sources have a significantly higher net positive charge (for instance +3, +5, +4 in *Maricantia*, tobacco and *Nostoc* respectively). Its hydrophobic stretch is particularly rich in Ala and poor in Ile at variance with the characteristics of transit peptides for cytf from other eucaryotes. Changes in the relative Ala content of hydrophobic stretches have been consistently observed between eukaryotic, procaryotic and intraorganellar sorting signals [25]. One can then wonder whether pre-cyf6 from *C. reinhardtii* would be successfully inserted in the thylakoid membranes from higher plants.

**A**

cyt f	MSNQVFTTLRAATLAVILGMAGGLAVSP----	AQA	YPVFA
cyt c	MLQLANRSVRKAARASQSARSVSCAAAKRGADVAPLTSALAVTASILLTTGAASASA		ADLAL
p21	MALTMNPVAVKASSRVAPSSRRALRVACQAQKNETASKVGTALAASALAAVSLSPSA-AMA		DIAGL
oeel	MALRAAQSAKAGVRAARPNRATAVVCKAKVGQAAAAAALATAMVAGS----	ANA	LTFDE
oeel	MATALCNKAFAPVARPASRRSAVVVRASGS	DVSRRAALAGFAGAAALVSSP----	ANA
oeel	MALASKVATRPVAVASRRGAVVVRASGESRRVAVLGGLLASAVAAVAPKA----	ALA	LTPVD

\* \*

**B**

C. r	MSNQVFTTLRAATLAVILGMAGGLAVSP----	AQA	YPVFA
M. p	MQNRNFNNLIKWAIRLISIMIIINTIFWSSI-----	SEA	FPIYA
N. t	MQTRNAFSLWKQITRSISVSLMIYILTRTSI-----	SSA	YPIFA
Nos	MRNASVTARLTRSVRAIVKTLIIAIAIVTFYFSCDLALPQSAAA		YPFWA

\* \* \*

Fig. 3. Comparison of luminal-targeting transit peptides for various nuclear-encoded polypeptides in *C. reinhardtii* (taken from [27]) with transit peptide of cytf (A). Comparison of transit peptides for cytf in *C. reinhardtii* and in other organisms (B) (M.p., *Marchantia polymorpha*; N.t., *Nicotiana tabacum*; Nos, *Nostoc* PCC 7906). Acidic residues are underlined whereas basic residues are in bold letters. \*point to conserved residues.

**Acknowledgements:** We are greatly indebted to Dr R. Herrmann for providing the spinach cytochrome probes. We wish to thank B. Savelli for this expert technical assistance in oligonucleotide synthesis, C. de Vitry, J.-P. di Rago, P. Netter and J.-L. Popot for helpful discussions and P. Bennoun for his encouragements in the early phase of this work. This work was supported by the URA/CNRS D1187.

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